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SUBJECT: U.S. COAST GUARD ASSESSMENT TEAM FINDS VIETNAM IN
COMPLIANCE WITH INTERNATIONAL SHIP AND PORT SECURITY CODE

¶1. Summary: From August 6-18, a team from the United States Coast Guard's International Port Security Program conducted a review of Vietnamese commercial shipping ports in accordance with the Maritime Transportation Security Act of 2002 (MTSA) and the recently-adopted set of security standards referred to as the International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code. Based on observations at seven commercial ports in Ho Chi Minh City, Vung Tau, Ha Long Bay, Quang Ninh Province and Hai Phong, the Coast Guard delegation determined that Vietnam has substantially implemented the ISPS Code. End Summary.

Visit Background

¶2. The MTSA was passed shortly after September 11 as a means to ensure effective security and anti-terrorism measures are in place at ports from which non-U.S. flagged vessels arrive and to which U.S. flagged vessels visit. Under the MTSA, the United States Coast Guard (USCG) is responsible for visiting all countries that trade with the United States by maritime means to observe implementation of the ISPS code and share best practices for implementation. The Coast Guard has conducted similar reviews in more than 50 other countries. Those countries found not to be in compliance with the ISPS could suffer negative consequences to their trade with the United States due to increased security requirements and delays when vessels from their ports attempt to enter the United States.

Assessment Findings

¶3. During an August 17 out-brief with the DCM and Acting Econ Counselor, the head of the USCG delegation, LCDR Mike Long, said that the team had a great visit to Vietnam and were very impressed by how open and forthcoming their Vietnamese interlocutors from the Vietnam Maritime Administration (Vinamarine) and the various ports were. The assessment team visited the facilities of: Tang Cang-Cat Lai and Nha Rong Terminal, Saigon New Port-Port of Ho Chi Minh City; Interflour Vietnam - Port of Vung Tau; B12 Petroleum - Ha Long City; Port and Coal Trading Company - Cam Pha Port; and Hai Phong and Chua Ve Terminals and Dai Hai Petrol Corporation - Hai Phong. Overall, the team concluded that Vietnam is implementing the ISPS Code at its ports. Long believes that Vietnam recognizes and is upholding its obligations as a strong partner in international maritime security efforts. The delegation issued a Country Visit Report detailing its findings and recommendations on a national level and providing specific comments for each of the ports it visited.

¶4. The report details several challenges for Vietnam, particularly in the areas of access control and inconsistent implementation of an

effective security drill and exercise program at its port facilities. The USCG delegation noted, however, that these were common problems present in many of the countries it has visited. The report also identifies several "best practices" used by Vietnamese commercial port facilities that the USCG plans to post on its website and share with other countries.

Vinamarine Reaction

15. At the August 17 out-brief with Vinamarine, General Director Lam was very pleased with the Coast Guard's findings. He recognized that Vietnam still faces many challenges at its commercial port facilities, and will continue to work with the numerous port operators throughout Vietnam to improve security measures and implementation of the ISPS Code. He thanked the USCG for its visit - noting that it was a good opportunity to learn from U.S. experiences and spurred increased vigilance for security issues at many of Vietnam's ports. Lam noted that the visit shows the international community generally, and the United States specifically, are interested in Vietnam and are seeking to help Vietnam address maritime security issues. The General Director mentioned Vinamarine's intention to reciprocate the visit and send a delegation to the United States to observe security measures at select commercial ports.

Next Steps

16. Based on this visit, the U.S. Coast Guard will issue a formal report later this year. The regional Coast Guard International Port Security Liaison Officer, LCDR Tom Griffitts, will likely deliver

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the final report to Vinamarine in person this December. The delegation expects the final report to call for a follow-up review of Vietnam's port facilities by a small team of Coast Guard officials six months after the report's issuance (i.e., in May or June 2007).

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